



Alan Inglis, M.D.

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HEALTH REVELATIONS

from America's Country Doctor

A note from Dr. Alan Inglis...

Dear reader,

I'm sure you noticed right away the new name and the new look of my newsletter. *Health Revelations* reflects the way I treat my patients and the way I write to you—by revealing the truth about your health and about some of those “forgotten” cures that you can't get anywhere else.

Don't worry. I'm still America's Country Doctor, so I'll always give you vital medical advice. And I'll never stop giving you straightforward medical news and the latest remedies to help you make the best decisions for your health. And I'll never hold back about how the FDA and Big Pharma are putting their own greed and lust for power ahead of your safety.

Your health is too important for me to keep quiet. So look for these things in every issue and much more. Drop me a note when you get a chance and tell me what you think.

In the meantime, I want to thank you in advance for your continued support!

Yours in good health,

Alan Inglis M.D.

Alan Inglis, M.D.,
America's Country Doctor

P.S. As a subscriber, you're entitled to receive my online column, called *House Calls*. You can sign up at www.HealthRevelations.com if you haven't already. It's my way of sharing the most up-to-date medical news in between your monthly issues.

Why taking those antacids may be deadly

Put the antacids down—not tomorrow, not next week. Put them down now. You might not realize it, but you could be in danger.

We're now learning that overusing antacids (like Nexium a.k.a. “the purple pill”) may actually mask a disease called esophageal adenocarcinoma, a fast-growing cancer that can kill you before you're even diagnosed. And the longer you're on them without a cancer check, the greater the danger may be. This disease's frequency has jumped five-fold over the past 30 years. (And so has the use of antacids—that's a pretty interesting coincidence, if you ask me.)

The drugmakers would never tell you about that, though. And of course what they'd really never, ever tell you is that you probably don't even need Nexium—or any other antacid—in the first place.

Here's the catch: Treating heartburn without antacids might require a lifestyle change. But it won't require you to waste hundreds or even thousands of dollars on antacids through the years. And it won't help cancer play hide and seek in your body.

Why your heart “burns”

Heartburn (gastro-esophageal reflux disease) happens when stomach acid sneaks up into your esophagus, creating a painful burning sensation in your chest and throat. This usually occurs when a normally tight band of tissue at the junction of your esophagus and stomach (called the lower esophageal sphincter, or LES for short) gets too loose—a problem that can also cause a chronic cough (especially at night), the result of stomach acid irritating your airway. Other symptoms include a sour taste in your mouth and nausea.

Most people think that the main culprit of heartburn is food, and to a degree they're right: Certain foods can relax the LES, either by relaxing the surrounding muscles (which is what coffee, alcohol, chocolate, and peppermints are known to do), or by directly irritating the esophageal lining (in this case, the main culprits are tomatoes, citrus, onions, and peppers). But there are other triggers that are just as important—including being obese, or even just a few pounds overweight.

You see, the bigger your belly

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heartburn

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is, the more pressure it puts on the LES, allowing stomach acid to splash back up into your esophagus. A big belly can also contribute to something called hiatal hernia, in which a portion of your stomach pokes up around the LES and into your chest cavity, resulting in acid reflux.

Several studies have shown that losing just a few extra pounds can reduce this uncomfortable expansion.

And the more you lose, the less of a problem it will be.

Prescription drugs also turn up on the list of heartburn causes. In fact, several common drugs out there can trigger heartburn, such as:

- Nitrites (usually taken for heart disease)
- Calcium channel blockers (for heart disease and high blood pressure)

- Birth control pills
- Benzo-diazepines (Valium and Ativan for example), and
- Tricyclic antidepressants (like Elavil).

Shutting out acid invites worse problems

Now, I don't blame anyone suffering from heartburn for wanting to get rid of it. And of course antacids seem like a good solution on paper—they overpower the stomach acid actually irritating the esophagus.

The problem is that once you're on an antacid it can be pretty tempting to keep using it. After all, these drugs allow you to tolerate the wrong foods that you'd otherwise avoid because of the pain they cause. And you don't even have to lose weight to reap the rewards.

In reality, your weight and diet are causing the problem—not a deficiency of Nexium, Tums, or Maalox. And if you can fix those two things, those antacids in your

Drug-free solutions for occasional heartburn

Now that you know to steer clear of antacids, you're probably wondering what you can use to treat heartburn whenever it happens to flare up.

One of the first supplements I usually recommend is marshmallow root. And no, not the corn-syrup-laden marshmallows you find in the cake section of your grocery store. I mean real marshmallow root, from the actual marshmallow plant.

Marshmallow root is part of an herbal group called demulcents—soothing substances that quiet inflammation in mucous membranes, including those in your digestive tract and esophagus. Demulcents actually coat, soothe, protect, and repair your mucosal membranes, which heartburn can irritate and damage.

I recommend 3 to 5 g of the Nature's Way product, two to three times a day. Other good demulcents include aloe vera gel and deglycyrrhizinated licorice.

HEALTH REVELATIONS

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medicine chest might become completely useless.

It figures. Leave it to the drug companies to invent pills for a problem caused mainly by being overweight, and then convince millions of patients that the only way to live and eat in peace is by taking their pills.

But just because your heartburn goes away with these drugs doesn't mean a cancer can't grow in your esophagus. Furthermore, antacids may even promote cancer by disturbing the normal chemical balance in your stomach!

The fact is, no matter how many antacids you use, you may still have a problem—you just can't tell because you've covered it up and calmed it down with a dose of Maalox, Pepcid, or Nexium.

Two of the main symptoms of esophageal cancer are difficulty or pain when swallowing and weight loss. Just using drugs to mask the heartburn that leads up to these telltale problems can end up being a tragic mistake.

If you've been taking any of these drugs continuously for many months or years—with or without a doctor's supervision—it could be time for a cancer check. Visit a doctor now and find out what's going on. After all, you can't know what's there, or how long it's been growing, until someone actually takes a look at it for you.

One of the most reliable tests for esophageal cancer is an endoscopy, a 10-minute procedure where a tube with a camera is

Identical cousins

If ever there was an example of corporate greed in Big Pharma, Prilosec and Nexium are it.

It turns out Nexium is almost completely identical to another drug AstraZeneca makes, called Prilosec. So, why make two of what is virtually the same drug? The answer is much easier than you'd think.

Prilosec is pretty much the original purple pill and was once the big name when it came to prescription antacids. But when it went off patent a few years ago that opened up the playing field for cheaper generic versions of the same drug. And it looked like Prilosec's time in the sun had finally expired.

Enter Nexium.

With a new and more expensive prescription antacid on the market, AstraZeneca launched an over-the-counter version of Prilosec, available to any heartburn sufferer at a fraction of the cost under the new name "Prilosec OTC".

But there's absolutely no proof that Nexium works any better than Prilosec OTC—even though it costs more to get your hands on.

In fact, one of the FDA's own medical advisers wrote: "The sponsor's [AstraZeneca's] conclusion that [Nexium] has been shown to provide significant clinical advantage over omeprazole [Prilosec] in the first-line treatment of patients with acid-related disorders is not supported by data [*emphasis added*]."

It's not surprising to me that antacids are the second-most profitable drug out there, coming in just behind cholesterol drugs. Because whether you head straight for the prescription Nexium, or prefer to try Prilosec OTC first, AstraZeneca has positioned itself to make a killing.

Not that you should be taking either of these drugs, considering what we now know about the link between antacids and heartburn and cancer. Instead, just save your money. And maybe your life in the process.

placed down your throat—don't worry, you're sedated—so your doctor can look at your stomach and esophagus up close.

Cancer's not the only reason that antacids are dangerous, though. Your body needs stomach acid for a multitude of reasons, and each one shows exactly why long-term antacid use isn't just a bad idea—it could be downright dangerous.

Stomach acid keeps the harmful bacteria that creep into your

gastrointestinal tract at bay.

Suppressing these acids for long periods of time increases your risk of gastrointestinal infections, pneumonia, and even stomach cancer. (Yet more reasons why it absolutely astounds me that any doctor would tell his patients to use these drugs long-term.)

Stomach acid also helps you absorb important micronutrients like calcium and magnesium, so

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10 INGREDIENTS YOU MUST USE IN YOUR THANKSGIVING FEAST

They'll save your heart, your eyes, your joints, and more

Oh how the mighty Thanksgiving feast has fallen.

It used to be a collection of good, wholesome, home-cooked, healthy foods all made from scratch. Roasted turkey. Fresh vegetables. Fresh cranberry sauce. Pies made from fresh fruit and homemade crusts.

Now turkey is being deep-fried in gallons of chemically processed vegetable oil. Vegetables are bagged and boxed. Cranberry sauce comes in a can. Desserts are pre-made, purchased in the freezer section, and covered in aerosol whipped cream. And—God help us—some people are even making microwave mashed potatoes.

And talk about excess! Our country consumes enough extra calories on any given day (Thanksgiving especially) to feed the entire population of Mexico. And most of it is loaded with trans fats and chemicals that the first Americans probably couldn't even pronounce.

The good news is that just by making your own Thanksgiving dishes, you can turn your favorite holiday feast into the kind of meal that saves lives—especially when it's not limited to holidays. All you

need are the right ingredients. So here they are.

1 A dash of cinnamon

This sweet spice can significantly lower your cholesterol, triglycerides, and blood sugar. Cinnamon also makes both muscle and liver cells more sensitive to signals from insulin, helping your body to better regulate blood sugar—making this a great spice for people battling diabetes.

In fact, in a test of 30 men and women with type 2 diabetes, when the group added a sprinkle of cinnamon to their meals, their blood sugar and blood-fat levels fell between 12 and 30 percent over the course of 40 days. That's a huge decrease.

The really good news is that this spice can be added to just about anything, including one of my favorite Thanksgiving foods: pumpkin pie. And, even after Thanksgiving has come and gone, you should try to get at least 2 to 4 g of cinnamon daily—this stuff can really protect you from diabetes. Trust me, your body will thank you.

2 A sprinkle of curcumin

This spice is full of antioxidants and anti-inflammatories, mak-

ing it ideal for alleviating pain, especially for rheumatoid arthritis sufferers. Its main component—a compound called turmeric—is used in all sorts of common seasonings, including mustard and curry.

Studies have shown that curcumin works just as well as hydrocortisone and other pain-relieving drugs. And, even better, all of the antioxidants in this spice help to neutralize free radicals, particularly those that cause joint inflammation and damage.

Arthritis isn't the only ailment that curcumin can help with, though. Some studies have suggested that this spice can offer protection from Alzheimer's disease. In fact, look at the elderly population of India, which has a very low incidence of degenerative disease. Turmeric is a staple in their diets.

You don't need much of this spice to get the good effects. Just sprinkle a little on your vegetables or potatoes.

3 A splash of cranberry juice

I'm sure you're familiar with the canned stuff: It looks like a cranberry-colored jelly log. Here's my advice: Ditch the canned stuff. All of the nutrients that make cranberry sauce so good for you have been entirely wiped out by chemicals and over processing.

Cranberries are loaded with antioxidants that are good for a multitude of purposes that we've already

talked about—basically these berries are just all around good for you. But if you're looking for something more specific: Cranberry juice is also known for improving urinary function, and it can protect you from urinary tract infections.

So instead of that canned cranberry gel, try making real cranberry sauce. And here's a trick that most recipes won't even tell you about: For an extra cranberry kick, try substituting the water that most recipes call for with real cranberry juice. The result is slightly more tart and tangy.

Remember, though: I'm not talking about the common supermarket stuff, which is almost always doctored up with high fructose corn syrup. I'm talking about the natural juice, either unsweetened or lightly sweetened with fruit juice. (In other words, throw away the Ocean Spray.)

4 A pinch of garlic

This is one of my favorite seasonings because it has so many uses, both medically and in the kitchen—and it tastes great in almost all of them.

But one of the best things about garlic is its reputation for helping people maintain healthy blood pressure levels. In fact, it's even been shown to lower blood pressure by between 5 and 10 percent. Garlic is also known to have cholesterol-lowering and triglyceride-lowering effects.

And let's not forget about its

effects on your glucose levels. Diabetics especially can profit from this stuff. In fact, research has shown that garlic can actually help stabilize your sugar levels and even help your eyesight.

Another reason I like garlic so much is that it's so easy to incorporate into different foods—and if you use it well, you may not even need any salt in some foods. It tastes great on poultry (turkey included), not to mention in turkey stuffing. It also tastes great when stirred into homemade mashed potatoes. Just make sure you use fresh garlic—not that salty powdered stuff you find in the spice aisle.

5 Throw in some cloves

Cloves are known to have similar effects to those of cinnamon. There's evidence that shows that when patients eat large enough amounts of cloves, they experience drops in glucose, triglycerides, and bad LDL cholesterol.

Cloves can also help prevent dangerous blood clots from forming, protecting you from life-threatening heart attacks and strokes. In fact, cloves are even better than aspirin when it comes to blood-thinning.

This spice mixes well with cinnamon, so you could consider sprinkling some in your pumpkin pie. It's also good for spicing up dressing, turkey stuffing, and vegetables.

6 A handful of nuts

They may not be a Thanks-

giving convention, but they can easily be incorporated into some of your favorite Thanksgiving recipes.

Many nuts—especially almonds and pecans—are full of healthy fats and nutrients, including the mineral boron, which can be especially beneficial to women.

Boron has shown to be just as effective at boosting estrogen levels as hormone replacement therapy. In fact, one study showed that women who get adequate levels of boron often have estrogen levels twice as high as other women.

If you're looking to incorporate some nuts into your Thanksgiving feast, how about a pecan pie? Almonds also mix well with vegetables like green beans, or as a topping for another Thanksgiving staple: sweet potato pie.

7 A little onion

They may not be great for your breath, but these things can work wonders for the rest of your body—especially your heart.

There's evidence that eating sufficient quantities of raw onion can actually boost your HDL cholesterol (that's the good kind) by up to 30 percent. Unfortunately, cooking the onions can take out some of the nutritional benefits—but there are still significant benefits there. Try mixing some extra onion into your vegetables for flavor (they're especially good when boiled along with green beans).

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10 ingredients you must use for Thanksgiving

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8 A few celery stalks

Another vegetable that tastes great in turkey stuffing is celery. And, like so many of the other ingredients I've told you about so far, it offers some great, heart-healthy benefits.

Celery contains a compound called 3nB, which blocks dangerous stress hormones and relaxes blood vessel walls. This allows blood to flow through your body with much less pressure, and, as a result, can actually have a calming, relaxing effect, and can also lower your blood pressure.

9 A cup of carrots

One of the best things about carrots is that they're full of antioxidants and carotenoids, especially

beta-carotene, which is known for its vision-preserving benefits.

There's a ton of research that suggests that carotenoids are vital when it comes to protecting you from eye disease, especially macular degeneration. The antioxidants found in carrots—and other orange, red, yellow, and leafy green vegetables—actually protect your eye from damaging inflammation, potentially saving your vision in the process.

How about serving steamed carrots as a side dish to all of your other Thanksgiving dishes? For an extra healthy and flavorful kick, add a sprinkle of cinnamon to them.

10 Extra-virgin olive oil

Once again, here's an ingredient that—on first glance—doesn't seem like much of a Thanksgiving staple. But this oil offers some

very good heart benefits. And it gives you a great chance to toss the unhealthy, chemically processed vegetable oil that we now know is so bad for us.

Olive oil is created through a pressing process, in which olives are pressed numerous times to extract the oil. Each pressing yields one batch. And with each pressing, those olives lose more and more minerals and nutrients.

Among those nutrients are some very healthy and beneficial antioxidants that are known for protecting your heart from inflammation—unlike vegetable oil, which does the exact opposite. But these nutrients are only available from the first pressing, from which virgin olive oil is produced.

If you're planning a dish that calls for oil, give your arteries something to be thankful for, and try substituting with virgin olive oil. **HR**

heartburn

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taking these drugs means you're more likely to develop a nutritional deficiency. And the older you are, the worse these drugs are for you—you make less stomach acid as you age, so you need even more calcium and magnesium to stay healthy.

And acid blockers can cause many, many other side effects including abdominal pain, constipation, and diarrhea (probably because of the disruption of your gut bacterial balance). They can also cause confusion, drowsiness, flushing,

headache, dry mouth, and nausea.

Even the drug companies suggest that antacids only be used short-term—for periods of about eight weeks, sometimes 16, or on rare occasions, 24 weeks if absolutely necessary. But no longer—even when they're being used to treat stomach ulcers (which they occasionally are).

In fact, the only time these drugs are ever recommended for permanent use is in patients who've had a rare condition called Zollinger-Ellison Syndrome, which causes a stomach tumor that results

in excess acid production. Because of their small size and tricky location, only about 20 percent of these tumors can be surgically removed. But on the rare occasion that they can be removed, acid-blocking drugs are usually stopped.

Long-term use of antacids can be dangerous and possibly life-shortening. Don't assume that just because the drug gets rid of your symptoms you can't have a cancer growing in your esophagus. If you lose those extra pounds and pay attention to your diet, you may not need a drug in the first place. **HR**

FORGOTTEN CURES

Curing toenail fungus shouldn't have to cost you your liver

It's probably one of the oldest complaints (and biggest nuisances) out there: toenail fungus. And for such a minor problem, it can be incredibly difficult to treat—so difficult that some people are even willing to risk their livers to get rid of it.

I'm not kidding. It's not enough that people are risking their livers trying to clear up the sniffles with drugs like Ketek, a problem I told you about in my last issue.

This time I'm talking about Lamisil, which, to be honest, has been known to clear up a few cases of toenail fungus here and there. But it's also potentially toxic to your liver, with some rare cases of

liver failure and death reported.

For most people, toenail fungus is purely a cosmetic concern. But for those with diabetes, poor circulation, recurrent skin infections, or HIV, toenail fungus can actually travel into the surrounding tissues or blood, causing serious illness. These are the cases in which one of the riskier, more aggressive drugs might be in order—but even then, it's worth trying a natural cure first.

You see, for years people managed to successfully treat toenail fungus with tea tree oil or Vicks VapoRub.

That's right: tea tree oil and Vicks VapoRub—two common

cures that are super cheap and sitting right there on your pharmacy shelves. They're also topical—which means no pill to swallow and no liver risk to worry about. And since they're safe and cheap, you might as well try them first.

Both products contain natural antiseptic and antifungal agents that can actually disinfect the affected area.

The trick is that you have to use them at least two or three times a day, for at least three to six months—no exceptions. Apply either of them with a Q-tip, making sure to get the area around the cuticle, where much of the infection grows. Try to let it soak into your foot before putting on shoes and socks.

Also, interestingly enough, these cures take about the same amount of time that any of the prescription medication takes, less in some cases. Take Penlac, for instance. This is a topical ointment intended for treating fungus. But it costs a good deal of money and you have to use it for almost a year.

Keep in mind that how quickly your fungus clears up depends on how severe your case is: The more developed or widespread the fungus, the longer it's going to take. **HR**

FEND OFF FUNGUS BEFORE IT REACHES YOUR FEET

Because toenail fungus usually comes from going barefoot in moist public places or from sharing shoes, the best way to avoid this problem is through practicing good hygiene.

1. **Wear cotton or wool socks**, which will stay drier and air out more easily. And change them frequently throughout the day—at least two or three times a day.
2. **Air out your shoes whenever you take them off.** Open up the shoestrings, loosen the tongue of your shoes, and remove the insoles to promote thorough drying.
3. **Wash your feet often and dry them well afterwards.** Make sure to use ample foot powder, if needed, especially between the toes.
4. **Never walk barefoot in public bathrooms or shower areas.** Wear some waterproof sandals around the pool and in the locker room.

Your Questions Answered

The facts about floaters

Q *I've recently noticed a couple of clear, squiggly lines always floating off to one side of my vision. They move as my eyes move and seem to dart away when I try to look at them directly. They drift when my eyes stop moving. Then I may not notice them for hours on end. They do not interfere with my vision in any way, but they're annoying. I know they're called floaters, but I don't know what's causing them? Should I be worried?*

—Jane Harmon, Staunton, Va

A It looks like you do indeed have what most people call floaters. And while some people get them and instantly worry that they have a brain tumor, nine and a half times out of 10, floaters are no big deal.

In fact, floaters are actually pretty common in people over the age of 50, and they're even more common in folks with diabetes or who've had cataract surgery (both cause tissue disturbances in your eye).

You see, 80 percent of your eye is filled with vitreous, a clear, jelly-like substance that helps your eye maintain its round shape. Over the years, vitreous can start to shrink, eventually becoming stringy. Then the strands cast a tiny shadow on the retina, the part of the eye that processes what we see for the brain. These are floaters. They may appear as spots, cobwebs, hair, bits of

string, and, for some people, like a hot dog. In most cases they are part of the natural aging process and are harmless.

However, like most conditions, there are cases that can be serious. If your floaters come suddenly with flashing lights or blurry, hazy vision, you need to see an eye doctor immediately. This could be the sign of a serious condition known as a retinal detachment, in which the vitreous pulls away from the retina. If not treated, this can result in permanent vision loss.

Floaters can be distracting and worrisome at first. Eventually they settle down towards the bottom of the eye, and, over time, most people simply stop noticing them. Although they may never disappear, they will be less bothersome.

In rare cases floaters actually can become too dense and too numerous, causing them to interfere with vision. In such cases an eye doctor may recommend surgery to remove the vitreous debris. But surgery rarely gets all the floaters and actually might make the condition worse for a few patients. Most eye doctors are reluctant to perform surgery and will give you up to a year to see if the problem becomes less noticeable. Thin, sharp strands, which are common, are less likely to be helped.

Unfortunately, there is no proven prevention for floaters. But there are definitely things you can do to protect your eyes, including your

retina, where so many vision problems originate.

One thing you need to do is make sure you're getting plenty of carotenoids in your diet, especially lutein and zeaxanthin. These nutrients are found mainly in red, yellow, orange, and leafy green vegetables.

Sleep is another important factor when it comes to maintaining good vision. Darkness is a time for your eyes, especially your retina, to rest and replenish. And while getting adequate sleep and nutrients does not guarantee that you'll never suffer from floaters, these things will help your eyes maintain their overall health, making such problems less probable.

The text contained herein does not constitute medical advice. Health Revelations advises that you consult your own physician before acting on any recommendations contained within this publication.

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